

Tough task ahead for Kiwis

PERTH, Nov 10: Martin Crowe's New Zealanders face their moment of truth here Friday when they cross swords with Australia in the opening clash of a three-Test cricket series, reports AFP.

Allan Border's side, buoyed by a comprehensive 4-1 whipping of England in the Ashes Series in last year, are formidable foes given an even sharper edge on a WACA ground wicket rated as helpful as any in the world for quality pace bowling.

They must be strong favourites to win back the Trans-Tasman Trophy, but Border has warned players not to under-estimate the opposition.

"We have to be wary because we have been beaten by New Zealand a few times," he said. "When they appear to be at their worst, they come up and beat you."

New Zealand coach Geoff Howarth said: "It's certainly never been a problem for New Zealand sides to get motivated for Tests, especially against Australia."

The Kiwis have a psychological advantage: Their five-wicket win at Eden Park, Auckland, in March in the final Test of a three match series which they squared 1-1.

But, judging by their form over the past three weeks, they'll need more than a fair share of the breaks to trouble Australia on their own soil, and more particularly in Perth.

The home team have two proven speed champions, Craig McDermott and Paul Reiffel, to let loose on the bouncy pitch.

and a third, newcomer Glenn McGrath, is licking his licks at the opportunity to start his career in such helpful conditions.

McDermott is back to peak form after serious injury problems in England.

Reiffel grew in stature during the England tour, taking 19 wickets in three Tests.

McGrath, 23, has earned the nod for the third pace berth after promising early season form, including an impressive performance against New Zealand in the tourists first-class game in Newcastle, where they gained their only win in five warm-up matches.

New Zealand's capacity to handle this hungry trio, in the other Tests in Hobart and Brisbane as well as this one, may determine the outcome of the series.

The tourists must be concerned that, over a span of eight completed team innings, only one player, Crowe, has notched a century.

They have been desperately unlucky in their past three games to be without seasoned opener Mark Greatbatch, who broke a finger in the opening first class game of the tour against Western Australia here.

Greatbatch still has hopes of being fit for the Test. Such is his importance in the side that a decision is likely to be delayed for as long as possible.

If Greatbatch remains sidelined, the Kiwis will be forced to open with Blair Pocock, 23, and Bryan Young, 29, a pairing with no Test experience and a recent record suggesting they are unlikely to succeed at that level.

In their past five associations against the new ball they have forged stands of 2, 0, 10, 0 and

SA-Zimbabwe tie rained out

BANGALORE, India, Nov 10: Rain forced the Hero Cup one-day international between South Africa and Zimbabwe to be abandoned here today, reports AFP.

The match was reduced to 37-overs-a-side after slippery ground conditions, caused by persistent rain since Tuesday morning, delayed the start by over two hours.

South Africa, sent to bat on a drying wicket, were a shaky 22 for one in nine overs when another spell of rain forced the umpires to call off the match.

The two African neighbours shared a point each in their first outing in the five-nation tournament being organised to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Cricket Association of Bengal.

The 21-day event also features West Indies, Sri Lanka and hosts India.

Each team plays the other once in the round-robin format with the top four moving into the semifinals. The final will be played at Calcutta's Eden Gardens on November 27.

South Africa take on the West Indies next in Bombay on Sunday, Zimbabwe face Sri Lanka in Patna on Monday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Hero Cup one-day international between South Africa and Zimbabwe which was abandoned after nine overs due to rain here today.

SOUTH AFRICA:
Wessels not out 10
Hudson lbw b Brain 5
Cronje not out 4
Extras: (w-3) 3
Total: (for one wicket, nine overs) 22

Fall of wickets: 1-18
Bowling O M R W
Brain 5 1 12 1
Streak 4 1 10 0

STANDINGS
League standings after Wednesday match (played, won, lost, tied, points):
West Indies 1 - - 2
India 1 - - 2
South Africa 1 - 1 1
Zimbabwe 1 - - 1 1
Sri Lanka 1 - 2 - 0

Greatbatch fit for 1st Test

PERTH, Nov 10: New Zealand opening batsman Mark Greatbatch declared himself fit to play in the first cricket Test against Australia, reports AP.

Greatbatch has not played for almost three weeks after breaking his left forefinger during a match against Western Australia.

The left-hander passed a fitness test on Wednesday morning and said he was a certain candidate for the Test, which starts Friday at the WACA Ground.

He battled for more than 20 minutes against fast bowlers Danny Morrison, Simon Doull and Willie Watson and then made himself available to partner Blair Pocock at the top of the order.

"I'm available for selection," Greatbatch said. "There's a lot of jarring there still but the finger has come on really well."

In the last two days, I've had very good workouts and it's felt good.

The only problem is that I haven't had any cricket for

about three weeks, but I feel good about getting out there.

Greatbatch said he wasn't concerned about his lack of match practice.

"I think form goes out the window for Test matches," he said. "Sometimes I've played very well in Test matches without having any form to take into the game."

"It's a matter of getting the line right and competing."

Two New Zealanders suffered minor injuries during practice on Wednesday, but both will be fit to play.

Captain Martin Crowe suffered bruising his left bicep after being hit by a bouncer from Doull, while pacer Merv Hughes was cut on the mouth when hit by a ball thrown from close range by team physiotherapist Mark Plummer.

One man who will be keen to test out the resolve of the New Zealanders is Australian fast bowler Craig McDermott, who will return to Test action after missing most of Australia's Ashes Series win in England.

Australia won that series 4-1 despite McDermott's absence

with a groin injury.

"I was disappointed, but now I just have to get on with the rest of my career," McDermott said.

"I don't think I've been in better shape and I've been very focused on what I've had to do to get back."

McDermott will be without his longtime strike partner Merv Hughes, who is recovering from knee surgery, but said he expected good support from Paul Reiffel and Rookie Glenn McGrath.

The Australians have not settled on a starting lineup but may leave out spinner Tim May despite captain Allan Border's fascination with the possibility of using two spinners on a pitch that normally favors pace.

"Bowling here is completely different to bowling anywhere else in Australia," said May's spinning colleague Shane Warne.

"The thing you're going to have in your favor is the bounce."

"You might get wickets with players trying to cut, or from edges when they misjudge the bounce."

Krishnan sees bright side

NEW YORK, Nov 10: Ramesh Krishnan, India's Davis Cup stalwart, rolled out the welcome mat to Pete Sampras and Jim Courier on Tuesday, saying he hoped the top US players to come to India for next year's first-round Davis Cup match, reports Reuter.

"From India's point of view it's a good opportunity to get the best players to come and play in India, and I hope Pete and Jim would make the trip," Krishnan said in a telephone interview with reporters from his residence in Largo, Florida.

India hosts the United States in the World Group first round match March 25-27. It will be the first US visit to India for Davis Cup since a winning trip to Bombay in 1963.

Sampras is the world's top-ranked player and the reigning Wimbledon and US Open champion. Courier is number two and won his second consecutive Australian open title in January and was a finalist at

both the French and Wimbledon this year.

"I think the US is the strongest team in the draw and we are probably one of the weaker teams so we have nothing to lose," said Krishnan, who is ranked 296 but helped India make a surprising run to the Davis Cup semifinals last year.

"Even if they do send somebody else (than Sampras or Courier) America has enough good players to come and beat us."

"Overall for tennis in India, I think it would be nice that people would see Jim and Pete. Those are the names people are more familiar with."

Krishnan, 32, restricted much of his playing schedule to second tier or challenger tournaments this season. His expected Davis Cup teammate Leander Paes is ranked 181.

There has been speculation India would break from its pattern of hosting Cup matches on grass by choosing clay. Krishnan said it wouldn't matter what surface was chosen.

China, Aussies to fight for final slot

SYDNEY, Nov 10: China and Australia will play each other for a place in next year's volleyball World Championships in Greece after scoring easy wins in a five nation qualifying tournament here Wednesday, reports AFP.

China thrashed underdogs Chinese Taipei, while Australia crashed Iran's hopes of joining Japan as the second country from the Asia region to compete for the world title.

China and Australia have each won two games from three and will play their fourth and final qualifying match here Thursday.

Japan, unbeaten in three rounds, cannot be denied one of the top two places and will play Iran, while Taipei bows out without a win.

Results of matches played Wednesday:
China bt Chinese Taipei 15-4, 15-7, 15-4.
Australia bt Iran 15-10, 15-3, 15-7.

STANDINGS
Played Won Lost
Japan 3 3 0
Australia 3 2 1
China 3 2 1
Iran 3 1 2
Chinese Taipei 4 4 0

Manchester now turns to 2002 C'wealth Games

MANCHESTER, Nov 10: After two unsuccessful bids to host the Olympics, Manchester is planning a candidacy for the 2002 Commonwealth Games, reports AP.

The idea was launched Wednesday by Bob Scott, who led Manchester's bids for the 1996 and 2000 Olympics.

"I am convinced that Manchester must continue to think big," Scott said. Bidding for the Commonwealth Games will be an excellent step forward.

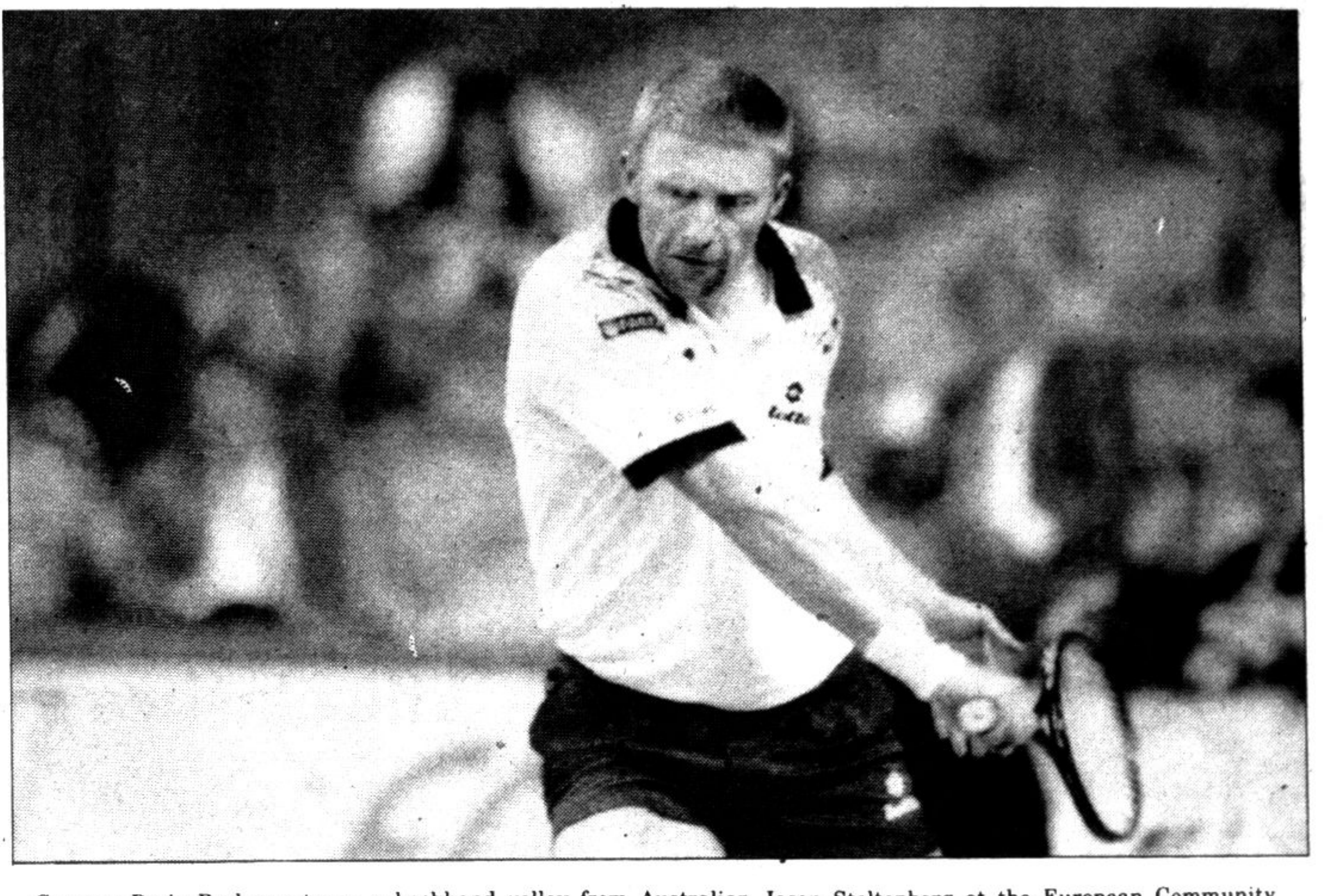
Manchester would try to become only the second English city to host the Commonwealth Games, following London in 1934. Sheffield is also considering a bid.

Cities have until December 1 to confirm their interest to the Commonwealth Games Council, which will choose England's official candidate on February 2.

"I believe that England has an excellent case for hosting the 2002 Commonwealth Games," Scott said. "2002 will be the Golden Jubilee Year of the queen's accession to the throne. So 2002 will be a notable year for the Commonwealth."

If Manchester does go for the Commonwealth Games, it would effectively rule out the possibility of the city launching a third consecutive bid to stage the Olympics in 2004.

The Commonwealth Games Federation will select the host city in 1995.



German Boris Becker returns a backhand volley from Australian Jason Stoltenberg at the European Community Championship tennis tournament in Antwerp on Nov 9. Becker beat Stoltenberg 2-6, 6-3 and 7-5. — AFP photo

Sampras sails, Becker toils

ANTWERP, Belgium, Nov 10: Pete Sampras started the final tune-up for the World Championships with an easy win at the European Community Championships. Boris Becker just staged a defeat that would have ended his ATP season, reports AP.

Sampras, seeking to cap a great season with a World Championship title next week, quickly overcame some problems with his serve Tuesday to coast past fellow American David Wheaton, 6-3, 6-2.

Becker, who needs to reach the final of the 1.11 million dollar event here to be able to defend his World Championship title, rallied from behind for an unlikely 2-6, 6-3, 7-5 win over Australian Jason Stoltenberg.

"I am lucky I can continue," said Becker, seeded fourth here.

Stoltenberg, serving for the match at 5-4 in the third set, appeared to hit a perfect ace for a 30-0 lead, which would have brought him within 2 points of victory. But umpire Paulo Pereira decided to overrule the linesman.

The Australian was so

shaken by the decision that he lost the next four points of the game, and all the remaining games to keep Becker's chances alive in the tournament.

Wheaton, ranked 54th in the world, kept abreast until 3-3 in the first set. But Sampras, ranked first in the world and at the Antwerp event here, wrapped up nine of the next 11 games — no sweat.

"It was a matter of a couple of good returns and serving a little better," he said afterwards.

Sampras already won Wimbledon and the US Open this year.

Second-seeded Michael Stich and Goran Ivanisevic, who won two of his last three tournaments, start their quest for the gold-and-diamond racket Wednesday.

In other matches Tuesday, Chuck Adams beat fellow-American David Witt 6-2, 6-2, and Swede Magnus Gustafsson ousted Australia's Mark Woodford 6-3, 6-1.

Apart from Becker, Ivanisevic and France's Cedric Pioline still have a shot at qualifying for the World Championships, which brings together the top eight players of the season.

Six of the eight slots are al-

ready clinched by Sampras, Jim Courier, Sergi Bruguera, Stich, Stefan Edberg and Andrei Medvedev.

Pioline moved to the second round, after beating American MaliVai Washington late Monday. Pioline is ranked 11th in the world now but also could qualify if he wins in Antwerp.

Becker, still seventh in the ATP rankings, said he will have to reach the final here if he is to stay in the top-eight. That's because the ATP point system could drop him back several places when it scraps his year-earlier results at the end of the week.

The question was almost academic after Tuesday's match. The German had a nightmarish first set when he was no match for Stoltenberg, ranked 43rd in the world.

The Australian compensated his lack of brawn with clever shots, often wrongfooting his towering opponent.

But Becker, full of his trademark inner torment, fought back in the second set and came back from 0-3 and two points from defeat in a 2-2 hour thriller for the 5,000-strong crowd at the Sports Palace.

Garrison upsets Fernandez

PHILADELPHIA, Nov 10: Zina Garrison-Jackson upset third-seeded Mary Joe Fernandez 6-4, 6-1 in the first round of the 750,000 dollar Virginia Slims of Philadelphia on Tuesday, reports AP.

Jackson played sound attacking tennis and her sliced strokes from an undercut backhand won her several important points. Fernandez was usually the first to fumble in hard fought running exchanges.

Garrison-Jackson, who won tournaments at Oklahoma and Budapest this year, won seven straight games from 4-4 in the first set to 5-0 in the second set. She won the match in the seventh game of the second set when Fernandez made a high volley backhand shot into the net.

"My confidence is up and I've been playing very good tennis," Garrison-Jackson said. "In the beginning of the year, I was also playing well but not winning many matches. But now I am winning them."

Garrison-Jackson earned a second-round meeting with Lori McNeil, who won the first match of the day, a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Larisa Neiland.

McNeil proved to be the better volleyer in the match, even though Neiland was a runner-up for the US Open and Wimbledon doubles titles with Jana Novotna as her partner.

McNeil rose from 1-3 to lead 5-3 in the second set and won the match from 5-4 with a passing shot down the line.

In another match Tuesday, No 4-seeded Gabriela Sabatini overcame Angelica Gavaldon, 6-2, 6-2 in a match of close exchanges from back court with many games battled to deuce.

Gavaldon made spectacular recovery plays and showed heavy strokework before losing the contest on the fourth match point with a running cross-court forehand shot into the net.

Tracy Austin, a wild card entry, lost her first round match Tuesday to Ann Grossman, 6-4, 6-1, 6-4.

Muster wants someone to pay

MIAMI, Nov 10: Jurors began deliberating on Tuesday in a 20 million dollar lawsuit filed by Austrian tennis star Thomas Muster for a 1989 car accident which knocked him out of competitive tennis for six months, reports Reuter.

The panel met for four and one-half hours before stopping for the night. Jurors were scheduled to resume deliberations on Wednesday morning.

During closing arguments earlier in the day, lawyers for Muster told jurors that the March 1989 accident left Muster, now 26, with torn ligaments in his left knee.

The injury will likely shorten

his tennis career, according to testimony during the two-week civil trial.

"Thomas lost a lot of money," said David Gold, one of Muster's attorneys, told jurors.

Just hours before the mishap, Muster had beaten Yannick Noah in the semifinals of the Lipton International Players' Championships at Key Biscayne.

A volunteer tournament driver took Muster and two companions to a popular tourist shopping area in downtown Miami. Muster was removing bags from the trunk when an oncoming car struck the tournament vehicle and pushed it backward into him.

The driver of the other car, who is among the defendants

in the lawsuit, was charged with drunken driving.

But Muster's lawyers also blame the tournament's volunteer driver, who they said was driving erratically, and the tournament organizers and event sponsor General Motors which provided the vehicles driven by the volunteers.

"This case is all about money," said lawyer E Thom Rumberger who represents volunteer driver Linda Boyd, General Motors and some of the other seven defendants.

"Mr Multimillionaire from Austria is going to take home a bunch of money," Rumberger said loudly during closing arguments as he pointed at Muster, seated between his two lawyers at the defence table.



Newsmen inspecting an under-construction swimming pool at Mirpur yesterday. The complex will be used during next month's sixth SAF Games in Dhaka. — Star photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 A journalistic "W"
4 Model Carol
7 Skeletal stuff
11 Arizona Indian
13 "Humbig" author
14 "Mia 18"
15 Terrible guy?
16 "I — Camera"
17 Barber-shop pronouncement
18 Brit's "boob tube"
20 Tars' bars
22 Charged particle
24 Requester's word
28 Street crossers
32 WWII general Curtis
33 Tear apart
34 "How Green — My Valley"
36 Item from Leno
37 Clutch
39 Wigs
41 Yearn

DOWN
2 Pitched a bug
3 Autumn birthstone
4 "The — Daba Honey-moon"
5 Flock member
6 Choreographer
7 Daredevil with his ups and downs
8 Mine output
9 Kibosh
10 Superlative ending
12 Modern wheels
19 The solvers
21 Baset by Solution time: 24 min.
23 Fresh
25 Frenzied
26 Sushi wash-down
27 Bette Davis trademark
28 Mischievous
29 Erstwhile "This Old House" host
30 Author Hunter
31 Potential syrup
35 Gel
38 Mrs. Al Bundy
40 Carnival locale
42 Kathie Lee's cohort
45 Parlor piece
47 Superbad
48 Start from scratch
49 Neighborhood
50 Squirrel's home
51 Adept
52 Reticent
54 New Jersey lort

CRYPTOQUIP
B Y Y C - H V K Z I K Z T A K P Y .
A K T V H Y P L K T V H N K I Y H Q
P Y M B H V Y C Q Y L X
Q A M Y V Q X Y L M Z .
Saturday's Cryptoquip: CROWS ARE NEEDED IN MOST RESEARCH FACILITIES TO DEMONSTRATE CAWS AND EFFECT.
Today's Cryptoquip clue: C equals P
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.